A Presentation of the 2012 Drainage Research Forum

November 20, 2012
Farmamerica, Waseca MN
Develop a **voluntary** program to enhance water quality

- **Maintains farm profitability and enhances water quality** across the state

- **Recognize Farmers** who are doing a good job

- **Provide certainty and assurance to the public** that we’re enhancing water quality

- Provide **“certainty”** to farmers that attain and maintain certification criteria
The Context

Who's to blame for sediment choking Lake Pepin? (5/12/11)

High crop prices a threat to nature? (11/28/11)

New regulations recommended for agriculture in Water Sustainability Framework (7/7/11)

The Gulf’s Growing Dead Zone (6/17/08)
The Goal

* Meet the challenge, collaboratively, and enhance ag profitability and water quality
Memorandum of Understanding

Signed by Governor Dayton, Secretary Vilsack and Administrator Lisa Jackson on January 17, 2012.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=S1uF-G2w03g#!
What does the MOU say?

- Support for a voluntary program
- Establish a MAWQCP Advisory Committee
- Provide recognition and certainty to producers and the public
- Coordinate and prioritize funding

STATE OF MINNESOTA
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

ENGAGING IN A STATE AND FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP IN SUPPORT OF THE MINNESOTA AGRICULTURAL WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

We, Mark Dayton, Governor of the State of Minnesota; Thomas J. Vilsack, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture; and Lisa Jackson, Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, by virtue of the powers vested in us, do hereby issue this Memorandum of Understanding:
What is “Certainty?”

- Offered by executive branch of Minnesota state government
- Not an exemption from existing rules and regulations
- Applicable to a specified area of land
- Applies only to ag land management and practices that could affect water quality

**Conditional upon:**

- Implementation of recommended practices
- Maintenance of practices during certification
In practice, “Certainty” means...

- No new state water quality regulations applied to certified farms during period of certification
- Certified farms considered to be meeting their contributions to any targeted reductions of pollutants during the period of their certification
- Certified farmers recognized as responsible protective stewards of their land and water quality
- Assurance that certified farmers are doing their part to avoid water quality impacts from their farming operations
Minnesota Department of Agriculture
Commissioner Frederickson

MDA Advisory Committee
1. Advisory to the MDA Commissioner
2. 15 Members
3. Provides recommendations for program development & implementation

Public & Stakeholder input
Criteria Synch Process

Agency Input/Invited Experts
NRCS subcommittee
Other subcommittees
MDA Advisory Committee Members

- Farmers/ranchers (2)
- Farm organization representatives (2)
- Commodity/livestock representatives (3)
- Ag-related business representative (1)
- Farm service advisor/representative (1)
- Environmental organization representatives (2)
- Conservation organization representatives (2)
- Local government unit representatives (2)
Project Timeline

- **March 5, 2012** – Official announcement of MAWQCP Advisory Committee in State Register
- **March 20, 2012** – NRCS Minnesota State Technical Committee develops subcommittee on certification in relation to fed/state conservation delivery systems
- **May 31, 2012** – Advisory Committee member appointments announced
- **June 27, 2012** – Subcommittee on Certification of the NRCS Minnesota State Technical Committee provides initial recommendations for the MAWQCP Advisory Committee
- **July 9, 2012** – Advisory Committee begins meeting (additional meeting dates of July 30, August 20-21, September 10, October 29, and November 13-14)
- **November 14, 2012** – Advisory Committee input submitted to Minnesota Commissioner of Agriculture
- **2013** – MAWQCP implementation begins
The committee submitted a series of recommendations presented in seven position papers:

- Pilot projects
- Program operations
- Program measurement tool
- Program data management
- Program certainty
- Program incentives
- Program promotion

**Program operations**

**Assessment**
- A question and answer tool is used to measure the operation. Assessment may be self-administered or with assistance from accredited MAWQCP reps.

**Technical Assistance**
- If the tool shows certification criterion not met, producers may access technical and financial assistance for meeting all certification criteria.

**Certification**
- Certification is determined by an MDA accredited certifier. Certifier can not have a conflict of interest with the producer.

**Verification**
- Audits periodically conducted by MDA to verify certified farms.
- Regular audits by the MDA of accredited certifiers to verify performance.

**Recertification**
- Upon conclusion of the term for which certification has been awarded, the operator may re-certify (but will need to meet any new assessment elements that may have been added since the prior certification).
Points of Note

- Commissioner Frederickson will now review the recommendations and make final determinations about the program details and roll out process.
  - MDA will develop pilot projects in three watersheds in consideration of the committee recommendations.

- The next step is to develop the program measurement tool, which will be based on NRCS products developed to assess conservation practices and effects.
  - It will be reviewed by a team of scientists led by MDA with the strong support of NRCS.
  - This process is likely to take a few months.

- There will be an opportunity for public review and comment on MAWQCP.
Questions?

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